

## **Occupational therapy guidelines for conditions in which the metacarpophalangeal joints could be splinted in extension**

Elani Muller<sup>1,2</sup>, Corrienne Van Velze<sup>1,3</sup>, Tania Buys<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Pretoria, Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa, <sup>2</sup>Western Cape Rehabilitation Centre, Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa, <sup>3</sup>Private Practice, Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa

**Introduction:** Even though occupational therapists are taught that the metacarpophalangeal joints should always be splinted in flexion, there are conditions which could require splinting it in extension. Since limited literature is found regarding these special circumstances, less experienced occupational therapists are often confused and do not know when to disregard the rule of splinting the metacarpophalangeal joints in flexion.

### **Objectives:**

1. Give an outline of the guidelines developed for conditions in which the metacarpophalangeal could be splinted in extension.
2. Provide insight into guideline development by giving an overview of the research process used.
3. Illustrate the use and application of the guidelines with a practical example.

**Method:** An exploratory sequential mixed methods research design was used to gather data in three phases. The three phases investigated published literature and expert opinions, through qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The data from the three phases were merged by connected mixed methods data analysis to develop guidelines.

**Results:** Occupational therapy guidelines for thirteen different conditions were developed and include not only splinting options, but also describe wearing schedules and therapy to complement splinting. The guidelines include different treatment options which will enable therapists to choose the best option for the patient, based on clinical reasoning.

**Conclusion:** These guidelines appear to be the first of their kind and can be used in a variety of settings. They are available in an easily accessible format. An example of one of the conditions, which illustrate how the guidelines can be used, will be presented.